



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2006

PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN'S LEGAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE LAUNCHES ITS CEDAW ASSESSMENT REPORT

TIRANA, ALBANIA—Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLR), a project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), launched today the CEDAW Assessment report in a public ceremony held at Rogner Hotel Europapark. The United States Ambassador, Marcie Ries, WLR staff, civil society organizations and other international donors attended the launch.

Women Legal Right's Initiative CEDAW Report assesses the level of protection of women's rights in Albania, utilizing internationally recognized standards established by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW, adopted in 1979 and ratified by the Republic of Albania in 1994 is described as the international Bill of Rights for women, covering many areas such as education, participation of women in public life, access to health care (including reproductive rights), family law, and property rights.

The Ambassador of the United States, Marcie Ries, in her remarks underlined the considerable progress of Albania, especially in adopting new laws but pointed out a number of obstacles that Albanian women continue to face, such as discrimination and violence, under-representation in decision-making, minor share in the country's monetary economy, trafficking, gender stereotypes and domestic violence. Ambassador Ries encouraged the government and civil society organizations to utilize the CEDAW Report findings to advance women's rights in Albania.

Ms. Emira Shkurti, WLR Legal Advisor, and Ms. Aida Orgocka, presented an overview of the CEDAW Report assessment findings. Their presentation pointed out the discrepancy between the generally positive legal framework and the poor CEDAW compliance in real life. The report analyzes 16 articles of the Convention and provides for each a thorough description of domestic legislation to determine its compliance with the CEDAW requirements. For each of the 16 articles the report points out areas of concern. Finally, Ms. Monika Asllani from the *Refleksione* Women's Association presented the plan the organization and WLR will undertake to raise public awareness about the CEDAW and the CEDAW Assessment Report.

The Women's Legal Rights Initiative is a four-year project of the United States Agency for International Development, focusing on the legal components of issues affecting women's rights, including anti-trafficking, domestic violence, and family law. Program activities include trainings for judges and other legal professionals, compilation of reference manuals for judges, technical assistance for legislative drafting for domestic violence and public awareness campaigns on women's rights. The Women's Legal Rights Initiative is a worldwide initiative that is presently working in Guatemala, Southern Africa, Madagascar and Benin in addition to Albania.

The office of the Women's Legal Rights Initiative is located at "Nikolla Tupe" St., no. 5 and can be reached by calling 254 885 or e-mail eshkurti@chemonics.com.

###